

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
In Opposition to Governor Malloy's Budget Cuts to DMHAS  
Thursday, February 18, 2016**

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

Our names are

**Robert Miselis, Shannon Callery, Joan Gallagher, Aaron Hayes & Ani Levy**

We are second-degree student nurses at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford, Connecticut. We are here in support of individuals living with mental health illnesses in the State of Connecticut.

As future nurses we have had, and continue to have, the honor and pleasure of meeting and working with these strong individuals living with mental illness. We are here to respectfully request that you reconsider the devastating proposed budget cuts to the state agencies tasked with ensuring that this population has the tools they need to succeed. In general, we are certain that these proposed immediate funding cuts will drastically increase the state's long-term expenditures for the future and more importantly cause a ripple effect to the entire community. Specifically, these cuts would adversely affect the mental health community in the following ways:

1. The proposed cuts to the School Based Mental Health Programs are unacceptable, as they would have a drastic impact on children experiencing mental health illnesses. It is the mental health services that these children receive through school nurses and in school-based clinics that keep them focused and provide them the tools that they need to succeed. Without these services these children are at risk for failing out of school and contributing to homelessness in the future. These children represent the future workforce in our state and it is our duty to do everything we can to protect them and their future.
2. Cuts to DMHAS' budget would double the caseload of the already thinly spread clinicians assigned to adults coping with mental health illness throughout our state. These individuals stay in control of their lives because they know and trust clinicians who ensure that they take their medications, stay connected to preventative care, maintain their health and remain safe in their homes. These clinicians are a safety net to assist individuals in avoiding a crisis and ending up without a home.
3. These cuts would drastically increase emergency room and in-patient visits as individuals seek care they would otherwise receive from clinicians who are currently funded with the monies that will disappear, ultimately creating a temporary solution to a long-term problem.

We have gathered specific and quantifiable statistics that we want to share with you. Given the short time we have with you today, we respectfully request to meet with you or your staff to provide you our evidentiary support for our requests today.

Thank you for your time and attention to this crucial matter.